SHORT NOTES

A PERSONAL NAME IN A JAR-INSRIPTION IN HEBREW CHARACTERS FROM ALEXANDRIA?

The upper part of an amphora found during excavations at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria in 1976 bears on the outside surface an inscription in square Hebrew characters, incised after firing. It was published in 1985 by Z.T. Fiema. He noted that the amphora is thought likely to have been made locally in the 1st century B.C. or the 1st century A.D., although foreign origin is also possible, and that the letter-forms are comparable with some found in ossuary inscriptions, the Copper Scroll, and at Beth She'arim. Fiema judged that the letters preserved are most probably brkml/h, and that the inscription may be incomplete. Noting that the fourth letter has a very thin stroke at the bottom, he left open the possibility that it should be reas as he, giving brkh, to be vocalized beráká. He concluded, however, that it was more probably a closed mem, or perhaps samekh; the latter is implied when he mentions the proper name Carcas (Est. i 10) as a reading which is possible in principle, but unlikely. In the drawing which accompanies his publication the fourth letter appears as a closed mem or samekh, rather than he, Fiema preferred in the end the transcription brkm, to be read as part of the Hebrew verb brk with third-person plural pronominal suffix, and translated "bless them".

In that case the inscription might be compared, as an expression of good wishes, with one uncertain reading of an incomplete jar inscription in square Hebrew characters from Cave 4 at Qumran (R. de Vaux, in de Vaux, Barns, Carswell and Milik, pp. 15-17). Yet it seems in general more likely that that the amphora would have been inscribed with the name of an owner, vendor or other user, or an indication of the contents. Fiema considered the possibility that a personal name should be read, but rejected it as "very difficult in this case" (Fiema, 117). For jars bearing Jewish personal names, compare an amphora stopping found at Alexandria, inscribed Ιουλιανος (CIJ no. 1439 = Horbury and Noy no. 21), other Qumran jar-inscriptions (Baillet, Milik and de Vaux, pp. 30, 40, n. 8, 164), and may of the series of amphora inscriptions

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found at Masada (Yadin and Naveh, nos 462-515, and possibly also no. 461, in Hebrew characters; Cotton and Geiger, nos 867-903, in Greek). The first of de Vaux’s two alternative readings of the Cave 4 jar-inscription would comparably give a user’s name Jair.

What seem to be the square Hebrew characters *du* form the stamp on an amphora ascribed to the 1st century A.D. found at Ibiza; J.M. Solá Solé, who published it, noted the possibility that it was imported from Judaea, perhaps via Carthage. The stamp may indicate the contents, as suggested by D.E. Noy (Western Europe I no. 178); he compares Masada tags marked with the same two letters, although the varying combinations of letters on these tags need not necessarily relate to contents. The two letters of the stamp may also, however, represent the abbreviation of a personal name. Solá Solé suggested Do(do) (Judg. x 1) and related names, but *du(sts)*, Dositheus, a more common Jewish name in the early Roman period, also deserves consideration (compare the ossuaries CIJ nos 1358-9, and the Masada tag Yadin and Naveh no. 382, all with *du*ts* in square Hebrew characters, and the amphora inscription Cotton and Geiger no. 902 Δωσ(ἴθως)). The two-letter abbreviation would find a general parallel in the two-letter abbreviations in some Latin amphora stamps, some of which are likely to represent personal names (Peacock and Williams, pp. 9-12); one such two-letter stamp is among the Latin amphora stamps found at Masada (Cotton and Geiger no. 951). There is therefore a fair case for a personal name here too, perhaps Do(sitheus), although the question remains open.

Against the background of attestations of Jewish names in jar-inscriptions it may be suggested that the letters on the amphora fragment from Alexandria should be transcribed *brks*, and read as the name Barouchos (Βαρούχος), the Hellenized form of Baruch preferred by Josephus (Ant. x 94, etc.); compare, probably at a later date than Josephus, CIJ no. 953 Βαρούχιος (Joppa). Other Greek forms of Baruch and Berechiah are attested in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, Βαρχίας at Tell el-Ychoudieh (Leontopolis; 83/2 B.C. or A.D. 5), and Βαρώχ and Βαρχίας in late Roman Alexandria (CIJ nos 1454, 1438 = Horbury and Noy, nos 43, 15, respectively). *brks* could perhaps also represent Βαρχίας, but fuller spelling with a υοδι would be the expected form in this case, and Barouchos therefore seems the preferable vocalization. For samekh incised in a square form resembling a closed mem, with the upper cross-stroke